Palazzo Poli, Rome 8th Feb 1873

My dear Maria

You'll be looking for another scribble & I'm glad to send you a heap of good news to cheer you in this dismal weather, for we have the rain daily tho' not the cold

I have picked up famously & now am able when the weather permits to go to the Public garden & spend 3 hours, returning home on foot some 1½ mile, this sets me up bravely

The spare part of my house has been taken by Philodramatic society who pay £125 a year which covers all my rent & something over, so that not only I alone am rent free but also the good Doctor - It seems my house was a lucky hit from the first, the Roman population has encreased so much that houses are in great request & the rents have doubled & trebled - now this is a great consolation to me for I was doubtful at such an undertaking, but the Doctor has turned out so well & I am so comfortable that it is all more than I could possibly expect, this has had a good effect on my [illegible] & strength - But for a cold I caught in my [illegible] I should be quite "Tommy"

the Doctor has ordered me a hand bath of hot olive oil which I find is doing me good

the gaities of Rome are commenced & last night there was a great ball under me & I lent my two beautiful flags - there was a down pour all night - & how thankful I was to be in bed - as yet I dont venture out in the evening, but the spring is begun, the trees are in blossom & Rome would be a Paradise if the rain would condescend to stop for the inundations are ruining Italy, as yet we in Rome are free & may heaven preserve us

The Doctor now has commenced his housekeeping he is laying in wine, charcoal, wood & grain, which he assures me is thus at ½ price, I pay £4.2 a day have a good breakfast of coffe egg, toast & butter, then a lunch & at ½ p 6 a capital dinner with the good company of the doctor & his two ladies (wife & sister) am I not fortunate! for I dreaded being alone after such an active consular life,

You'll have been delighted at news in Charleys letters that the good Arthur had c[illegible] I hope you

£30 a year & my other children make up the £10
so now you'll be easy on my account & I am so
likewise for now I can have a cab when I am
shaky, you'll say I'm fortunate, for at my age
real repose is every thing

Tom wont believe that next December 7.th I shall
be 80 but such is the fact. I confess I did all I
could to conceal my age whilst it was of use to
me but now I astonish every body for as yet I have not
a wrinkle & I speak of it as a misfortune that
however ill I may I never look ill

I hope you are getting thro' the ugly winter comfort-
ably & that Tom is able to go down to dinner without
help. Tell him that there is a great consternation
in Italy as the Italian voices & style are disappearing
no doubt this is caused by the great labour of
musical education being relaxed. There is a talk
in Paris of doing away with the Italian Opera as
there are no singers!! I am glad for it has been a
sad monopoly & shameful expenditure, my dear
Italian Sr Cappelli declares that a prima donna
is paid more than a prime Minister!!

fortune - but my poor dear Father saw that there was good stuff in me & certainly for a poor man did great things for me - I am always grateful to his memory for having preserved me against all chances

Here there seems little left for the Arts or even for Music & I should have stood no chance of ever getting a living

17th Our cold is a little abated, but the winter is severe every where - I hope you are not suffering from it or poor dear Tom - The change here as regards Music is most absurd, there being no school at this moment the opera is without a prima donna - That is a german singer was engaged to sing in the new opera Aida of Verde, but she has been ill ever since she came & so the theatre will have to close just in the busy time - There is no great Italian prima donna at present; the enormous army swallows up all the money & so no academy can be kept up

21 The sun has come & the warm weather has come & so I'll hope that all the same is to you & that your winter cold is breaking & that this week find yourself

Your loving brother Joe